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MIGHT or RIGHT?

The Fourteen Points and the Disposition of Kiao-Chau

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MIGHT OR RIGHT?

The Fourteen Points and the Disposition of Kiao-Chau

The year 1918 marked the beginning of an end. All uncertainty concerning the ultimate issues involved in the war disappeared when President Wilson on January 8, 1918, voiced the sentiment of all mankind in his address to Congress, embodying the famous fourteen principles. Open diplomacy, we were told, was to take the place of secret intrigues of the past. "Open covenants, openly arrived at," were alone to have legal validity. Power politics was adjourned, for justice, justice that knew not the weak nor the strong was to be the guiding principle in international relations. Peoples hitherto submerged under the domination and oppression of an alien power were promised the right of self-determination. Nations hitherto sandwiched between not too friendly neighbors were guaranteed an outlet to the high seas. Such being the case, all human beings irrespective of race or nationality were filled with joy. They were inspired, for towards the end of the year, instead of the ancient Three Wise Men of the East, the modern three wise men of Paris had given every reason for the plain people to believe that, at last,—The New Order Cometh.

This New Order does not come to China, however. The principles enunciated are admittedly sound, but up to the present all that China has received is the vibration of the sound but not the application of the princi-

ples. The decision reached by the "Big Three" in regard to Kiao-Chau is a surprise to all those who are under the impression that justice is never meant to be monopolized by Europe. It is a surprise to the world, for a mere flagrant injustice is hardly conceivable. The evidence justifies the assertion. Those who are conversant with history will recall that in the early nineties, the late Kaiser had been fishing for a pretext to impose German Kultur on the peaceful Chinese, who were too peaceful to offer the desired pretext in spite of repeated provocations. As time passed, the mailed fist became itching beyond cure, for something had to be done before others got busy on the job. Accordingly William Hohenzollern took advantage of the murder of two priests—no one knew who killed them—so that in all solemnity and theatricality, he commanded his crusaders to the East to fight for Religion, Kultur, and Fatherland. Two priests murdered and forty millions put under bondage! Has Germany acquired any rights in China, recognizable in the light of justice, morality or even common decency?

In 1914 Japan demanded Germany to hand over Kiao-Chau with the express purpose of returning it to China. The port was captured as expected and it remains to this day in the hands of the usurper, with China as the sole legatee of the damages incident to the war and the crimes committed by Japanese soldiers. They had commandeered goods and services from a sincere and honest population without compensation; they had caused damages to the amount of fifty millions of dollars; and they had committed crimes, brutalities and atrocities comparable to, if not worse than, those committed by the Prussians in Bel-

gium and Poland. We have it from the authority of an eye witness in those days of military operation that women were actually outraged by hundreds. The public is not acquainted with these facts, because it does not want to know unpleasant things. It prefers sweet things and sweet nothings. It refuses to believe that any nation with such an array of princes, viscounts, barons and plumed-knights parading the occidental world at regular intervals with all the semblance of civilization should look like innocent flower only with serpents under it. But the facts above enumerated are undeniable, and with these facts in view, the question may be asked: should the Japanese delegates be allowed to leave Paris with their trunks packed full of spoils?

The decision of the "Big Three" is therefore flagrantly unjust in that it seeks to perpetuate crimes that ought to be the shame of the civilized world. Two wrongs do not make one right. Has B, in robbing A, acquired any title to A's property? And if the opportunist C comes along and robs B, is A's title to his property in any way changed? If B escapes unpunished for the crime he has committed for a while but is subsequently brought to justice, will it be right to allow C, who has in turn robbed B, to run away loaded with the property that is really A's? Is might right? To answer in the affirmative is to overturn the very foundation of civilization.

The public is yet unaware of the extent to which the big powers have been bulldozed by Japan; it is yet ignorant of the consequences. An examination of the map will bring out the fact that Kiao-Chau is the

best port of the whole of North China. It will be the commercial center of North China as soon as normal conditions return. The control of such a port means the control of the economic development of an enormous hinterland lying in the interior. Japan will be able to manipulate things in such a way as to derive for herself the greatest possible benefit. With her in the key position economic burdens will be unbearable for the natives as well as for the outsiders. Possessed of a hinterland that has no access to the sea, the Jugo-Slavs, we are told, are supposed to receive Fiume, and Poland has already had Danzig internationalized. If the principle of the necessity of an outlet to the sea is applied to the Poles and to be applied to the Jugo-Slavs, how much more should it be applied to the Chinese? If the mouth of the Mississippi as a key to the whole valley is essential to the United States, why is not Kiao-Chau equally essential to China? Sound principles must be followed by sound application; otherwise they no longer remain sound.

Many of us can study international relations in the light of human nature without being bothered by the Sunday school platitudes and afternoon tea amenities. They are asking whether China is after all allowed to continue to exist. If she is to be inevitably doomed to extermination, then for heaven's sake, let her die a natural death once for all, without lingering or having her body mutilated gradually and piecemeal. The question is not so absurd as it may seem. In reaching the decision concerning Kiao-Chau, the gentlemen at Paris are merely postponing the funeral service Japan has planned for her neighbor. She has got Manchuria, Formosa and Korea, and now she is

given Kiao-Chau. With privileges to build railroads radiating from both places to all parts of China she has woven a spider's web with which she will undoubtedly hold China in perpetual bondage. With the aid of the treaties of 1915 and those of 1918, shamelessly forced on China at the point of the bayonet, she will be able to control her neighbor politically and economically and in time to announce to the world the passing of the Middle Kingdom.

"But," comes along the apologist who has an overdose of the sweet nothings of the Mikado & Company, "Japan will return the port to China." Evidently they are not aware that the word "return" is not as sweet as it may sound if not accompanied by the whens and hows. It is one thing to return the port in one year and quite another, in a thousand years. It is one thing to return it unconditionally, and quite another, if under conditions that represent losses to China greater than the alienation of the port. Furthermore, have we any reason to trust to Japan the fair and square administration of the territory even for a short time? Her present outrages in Korea speak louder than her promises, which are nothing but manufactured luxuries for foreign consumption. It is time for the world to learn that sincerity of purpose does not exist simultaneously with the creed of imperialism, nor is honesty to be expected from power politics.

Happily the United States is in a position to correct the wrongs while there is yet time. She has helped China in those critical days after the Boxer Uprising. She is not a party to the secret understand-

ings between Japan and the European allies in the dark hours of the world war. She is today not only the greatest example of democracy but also the most powerful nation in the world. China still looks upon her as the champion of a justice that knows no discriminations and a democracy that tolerates no imperialism.

More than twenty-four hundred years ago there was born in this province of Shantung a man whose name was destined to become a household word. He was, is and will ever be the idol of all China and the moral teacher of her millions. There remains to this day at this very spot a temple, ivy-clad and gray, with evergreens shading the whole area where pilgrims from all parts of the country come to pay their tribute to the man who has marked out the moral and spiritual life as the only life worth living. Had Confucius lived today, he would have counseled resistance to the unjust disposal of land and people as if they were chattels, for in the struggle for righteousness there is glory. He would have appealed to America to do justice, "not to do to others that which she does not want done to herself." Hearken to the sage! Twenty-four centuries are looking down upon the United States with anxious eyes, for upon the decision that the United States is about to make will depend the possibility of a New Order and the destiny of an ancient and distinct civilization.